

Holiday Decorating Safety

The holiday season is a great time to spend with family, friends, and loved ones. While a relaxing time, the weeks around Christmas and New Years see an uptick in home fires. Take some simple precautions and preventative measures to stay safe this winter.

Christmas Tree Safety

- ♦ Artificial trees should always be marked by the manufacturer as flame retardant.
- ♦ If choosing a real tree, make sure needles are fresh and green, and don't fall off when touched.
- ♦ Cut 1-2" from the base of the tree trunk before placing it in a stand.
- ♦ Keep trees, real or artificial, at least three feet away from any heating source. According to the National Fire Protection Association, one in six Christmas tree fires are caused from a heating source located too close to the tree.
- ♦ Keep trees away from exits.
- ♦ Add water to the tree stand daily to prevent needles from drying up.
- ♦ Dispose of the tree when needles begin to fall. Dried up needles and trees are a fire hazard.

Lighting Safety

- ♦ Any lights used should be for indoor/outdoor use.
- ♦ Light strands with broken bulbs and worn or broken cords should be replaced.
- ♦ Turn off all decorative and Christmas tree lights before leaving the home or going to bed.

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- ♦ Lights should be tested by a reputable testing lab such as UL.
- ♦ Do not connect more than three light strings together.
- ♦ Replace larger bulb lights with newer, cooler-burning mini lights. Larger, older bulbs burn hotter.

Candle Safety

- ♦ Do not use lit candles to decorate a Christmas tree.
- ♦ Keep candles in safe areas, where children or pets cannot reach or knock them over.
- ♦ Keep wicks trimmed, and use sturdy candle holders that can collect dripping wax.
- ♦ Do not leave a room where a candle is burning.
- ♦ Extinguish candles before leaving the home or going to bed.
- ♦ Keep flammable objects, like paper, food packaging, blankets, and wrapping paper away from candles and other open flames.
- ♦ According to the NFPA, nearly half of home structure fires occurred because decorations were too close to a heat source. Forty-one per-cent of those incidents were started by candles.

Ladder Safety

- ♦ When using a ladder to hang lights, have someone else present to help.
- ♦ Only place ladders on level, secure footing.
- ♦ Ladders should be placed one foot away from the wall for every four feet it reaches up. If a ladder is 12 feet in the air, it should be three feet away from the wall.
- ♦ Never stand on the top two rungs of an extension ladder or on the top of a step ladder.
- ♦ Keep a phone nearby in case of an accident.
- ♦ If hanging lights outdoors, stay away from power or feeder lines overhead.